Town of Scarborough Conservation Commission

September 25, 2024 | 6:00 pm | Town Council Chambers B and Virtual via Zoom

Minutes

Present in-person
Staff: Jami Fitch, Emerson Goodrich
Town Council: Karin Shupe

Present via Zoom
Commission: Bennett Flanders, Randi Hogan, Cathleen Miller, Abel Plaud, Maggie Vishneau, Jessica Sargent, Marla Zando
Staff: Angela Blanchette, Autumn Speer

Call to order

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm.
2. Randi offered a land acknowledgement to recognize the Wabanaki People as traditional stewards of Scarborough.
3. Abel motions to accept the minutes from the July meeting, Jessica seconds. Motion passes.
4. Jami adds Pest Management Advisory Committee (PMAC) update to the agenda under new business.

Public Comment

1. Anne Blanchard, a resident, expresses concerns around illness in the neighborhood and marsh health immediately after other neighbors spray for mosquitos. Discussion has been attempted with the neighbor who is spraying, but the individual is not open to addressing or compromising on such health concerns.
2. Andrew Mackie of Scarborough Land Trust mentions that there is an effort to support the land bond, which is on the ballot. Volunteers will canvas prior to the vote, and anyone interested in information or in volunteering or expressing their support can reach out to Andrew.
3. Heather Robinson, a resident and neighbor of Anne Blanchard, has been affected by the regular spraying of insecticide. The conventional sprays and insecticides have broad effects on neighbors, including Heather who cannot grow a garden as a result. She also had severe physical symptoms as a result that forced her to vacate her residence. The neighbors doing the spraying are not open to discussion.

Old Business

1. Environmental Standards
   - A roundtable discussion on the proposed environmental standards was held with Commissioners and engineers on 8/28 in lieu of the Commission's regular meeting. Councilors Shupe, Anderson, and Caterina also attended.
   - After much discussion, the group agreed to an initial compromise for wetland buffers and setbacks: and 25' setback, with the first 15' closest to the resource being maintained as a vegetated buffer.

- The Ordinance Committee will review the compromise setback/buffer at their September meeting.
- The group was open to continuing the conversation and agreed to meet again in January to discuss additional protections and the upcoming low impact development (LID) standards the Town will need to adopt.
- Karin notes that there is at least something on the agenda for the Ordinance Committee, and shares that there is a need for education around setbacks and buffers. New Town Councilors will need to be educated.
- Maggie asks about communication strategies and learning experiences for future proposed changes. Autumn and Angela underscore the importance of taking small steps especially regarding more oppositional topics and issues.
- Developers are aware the State will mandate Scarborough and other surrounding communities adopt LID standards, but they don't know specifics. Once the Town adopts the LID standards, they will go into effect immediately.
- Randi and Maggie discuss educational components the Commission can undertake surrounding the LID standards.

2. Planning Board Submittals
   - There are no submittals that need Conservation Commission review this month.

New Business

1. Commission's next focus
   - Jami mentions that the Commission has had ongoing discussions around adopting a pesticide ordinance, similar to South Portland's, but Council support was lacking so the issue didn't move forward. There has been an uptick in resident communications regarding pesticide usage, as well as residents frequently asking the Town to restrict pesticide use at public events.
   - The other potential topic the Commission is considering adopting is a tree protection ordinance, also similar to South Portland's.
   - Karin summarizes resident comments to Council regarding these two issues. She expresses that she has received many comments and complaints about clear cutting and none about pesticides. Karin also notes that a tree cutting ordinance is more in line with 30x30 goals, conservation goals, and current Council goals, as well as the ease of getting an ordinance on tree cutting through Council as opposed to a pesticide ban. She notes that a pesticide ordinance would likely require work and collaboration from other committees.
   - Marla, who helped develop the Town's pest management policy for municipal properties, notes the change in landscape and precedent concerning pesticides over the course of the past few years. She also touches on significant properties being clear cut in Scarborough and the difficulty of replacing these resources.
   - Cathleen expresses support for working on both issues and inquires about initial educational components that could build momentum. She cautions against picking up a similarly controversial issue while still undertaking the issue of environmental standards.
   - Jami notes that the Commission is being asked to select one topic to begin addressing now. The other topic will be taken up at another time.
   - Bennett inquires if the tree cutting ordinance needs as much support from the Commission as opposed to the pesticide ordinance, which might not get addressed otherwise, and adds that tackling both issues at once as an entire commission poses difficulties.
   - Maggie adds that the visibility of tree cutting might make it an easier issue to address in the community.
   - Autumn echoes that the tree cutting ordinance is top of mind for residents, and will likely be easier and quicker to put together. She also underlines Jami's point that prioritizing one issue only means

that the next issue will come shortly after. Autumn notes that the pesticide ordinance will be more difficult and slow moving.
- Jami adds that it would be very helpful to have community members speak to the necessity of the pesticide ordinance in front of Ordinance Committee and Town Council, rather than just hearing from impacted business owners.
- The Commission would like to move forward with a tree protection ordinance at this time.

2. PMAC update
   - Jami shared that Community Services is beginning to see signs of grub damage on the Town's playing fields. Per the Town's Pest Management Policy, a waiver will be needed to treat the fields. Jami and Todd Souza are looking into dealing with grub issues through spot treatment of Acelepryn in the spring to address to current grub issue and putting together a plan to start implementing regular biological controls to address grubs in the future. The goal is to avoid using conventional methods in the future. More information will be provided at the October meeting.

Updates

1. Education sub-committee
   - Cathleen notes the success of the talk by Beverly Johnson organized by Marla at the Library regarding the marsh. The talk was recorded and on YouTube, on the Library's YouTube channel. Cathleen notes they are able and willing to take on educational components and actions around the land bond.
   - Jessica adds that PCLB will collaborate with Cathleen and Marla around land bond outreach efforts.
   - Randi adds that Dr. Johnson received many questions about pesticides.
2. Town Council
   - Karin notes there are openings on the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board.
   - Karin wants to begin goal setting for the January meeting and asks the Commission if there's anything pressing they would like to contribute to the new Council goals.
   - The Gorham Connector workshop gave the impression that MTA is disorganized and potentially rethinking the project. MTA provided the following responses to the Commission's questions regarding the connector project:
     - Testing in 2023 indicates that greenhouse gas emissions will increase
     - MTA took no responsibility for environmental impact studies
   - The Town Council will undertake a resolution to remove support of the project at their 10/2 meeting.
   - Three new Councilors will be elected in November.
3. Sustainability Committee
   - Jami notes that the Sustainability Committee is working on Sustainable Scarborough Day preparation and modifications to the EV charging ordinance.
   - Jami will apply for a Community Action Grant to develop a Climate Action Plan.
4. Open Space Plan
   - Conserved land totals have been refined, and it appears around 20% of Scarborough is currently protected.
   - Jami requests that Commissioners answer the Open Space survey questions sent out, and additionally send it to other Scarborough community members and other interested parties.
   - The project should be done in early 2025. A draft is expected in November of this year. Another survey be available in late fall to allow the community to provide feedback on the draft plan.

5. Vulnerability Assessment

- There was a neighborhood meeting with Pine Point last night, and one with Higgins Beach earlier in September. The meetings focus on what sea level rise will mean for their communities over the next 80 years and begin to talk about adaptation strategies.
- The project should wrap up by summer 2025 and will consist of a Story Map as a final product. A public workshop to present initial findings will be held in the late spring.

Next meeting: October 23, 2024

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm.